

NSC BRIEFING

2 April 1958

## LAOS

I. Special national elections take place in Laos on 4 May. These are to increase the size of the National Assembly by 20 seats, from 39 to 59. In addition, one real vacancy is being voted on.

A. The elections will provide the Communists their first opportunity to test their popularity since they gained legal status in 1957.

B. The 20 new seats are the result of a population increase and the enfranchisement of women.

II. If pro-Communists were to obtain five of these seats, it would be locally considered a respectable showing, while ten ~~would~~ be an upset victory.

~~SECRET~~

DOCUMENT NO. 5  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐  
☒ DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
NEXT REVIEW DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
AUTH: HS 70-2  
DATE: 1-21-80 REVIEWER: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Although conservative control of Assembly is not threatened an impressive left-wing showing would probably result in the opening of diplomatic relations with the bloc, and possibly acceptance of bloc aid.

B. It would also prompt demands for greater Communist participation in the government.

C. It would boost Communist stock for next year's general election.

D. Finally it would have adverse repercussions throughout Southeast Asia.

III. Immediately after the 1957 settlement, the Communists commenced political activity under the cover of the Laotian Patriotic Front and are now making a major effort in the election campaign.

~~SECRET~~

A. They have entered into an alliance with the fellow traveling National Union Party of the demagogic Bong Souvannouvong which has 5 Assembly seats.

IV. <sup>pro-Communist</sup> The alliance is putting up one candidate for each of the 21 seats. 13 of <sup>its</sup> ~~the~~ candidates are former Pathet Lao functionaries.

A. Several reports indicate that in addition to the two northern provinces formerly held by the Pathets, the left-wing front is strong in southern Laos, and Prince Souvannouvong and Phoumi--the two top Communists--will be formidable candidates in the Vientiane and Luang Prabang areas.

V. The principal issues that are being pressed by the Communists are foreign policy and corruption.

~~SECRET~~

Approved For Release 2000/08/29 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000900080002-8

A. They are demanding not only neutrality, but that the government recognize Laos' Communist neighbors and accept bloc aid to "balance" its relations with the West.

B. They are also pointing to the luxurious living of some conservative politicians.

VI. In contrast, the two conservative, and basically pro-West, parties which now dominate the government (the Nationalists and Independents) are evidently more interested in improving their relative positions than in preventing a split in the conservative vote.

A. Although they were supposed to have a consolidated slate by 1 April, they still have 82 candidates in the field.

B. Our embassy reports that conservative leaders are hinting with increasing frequency that fraud and coercion will be necessary to defeat the pro-Communists.

~~SECRET~~